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All His Benefits

Henry Ostrom

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"All His Benefits"

BY

HENRY OSTROM

AUTHOR OF

"THE CRISIS IN CHURCH WORK"

"OUT OF THE CAIN-LIFE"

"GREATNESS"

"REPLETE RELIGION"

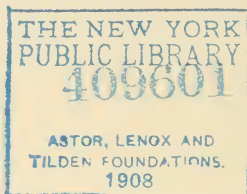
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...Praise...

— :: —

Where did praise ever appear an intruder? It is appropriate at the cradle. It befits the busy hour of manhood. It relieves sickness. It tones sorrow. It defies death. Even in the presence of sin praise has its dearly-won place since the sinner has been redeemed. Poverty is robbed of its vexations and the vanities and covetousnesses of prosperity are hindered by it. It is an antidote to homesickness, it abolishes strife, anger is ashamed in its presence, it adds culture to learning and reduces the ravages of ignorance, the grandeur of the palace is enhanced by it, the temple is glorified by it, it enlarges the spirit, it enriches heaven.

Psalm One Hundred and Third

1 Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless his holy name.

2 Bless the Lord, O my soul and forget not all his benefits.

3 Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases.

4 Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with loving kindness and tender mercies.

5 Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's.

6 The Lord executeth righteous acts, and judgment for all that are oppressed.

7 He made known his ways unto Moses, his doings unto the children of Israel.

8 The Lord is full of compassion and gracious, slow to anger and plenteous in mercy.

9 He will not always chide; neither will he keep his anger forever.

10 He hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us after our iniquities.

11 For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him.

12 As far as the East is from the West, so far hath he removed our transgression from us.

13 Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him.

14 For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust.

15 As for man, his days are as grass; as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth.

16 For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more.

17 But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children.

18 To such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his precepts to do them.

19 The Lord hath established his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all.

20 Bless the Lord, ye angels of his, ye mighty in strength, that fulfill his word, hearkening unto the voice of his word.

21 Bless the Lord all ye his hosts; ye ministers of his that do his pleasure.

22 Bless the Lord, all ye his works, in all places of his dominion: bless the Lord, O my soul.

CHAPTER ONE

Psalm One Hundred and Third



HIS Psalm is the great aeolian harp swept by the wind out on the hill remote from the rumble of the street cars or the shriek of the whistle or the barking of the dogs. Its music you hear unapproached by the discord of human accusation and controversy and conflict. It is not without its deep, rich base note, but imprecation is absent. The ozone of the heights, and the aroma of the forest seem to be in its melodious breath.

One hundred and forty-nine other Psalms, like many varieties of birds sing as it plays; yet you feel that it possesses such a distinguishing grandeur that (to change the figure for a moment) it would be the sun of the Psalms, and when it brings the dawn all the others sing better. The slightest zephyr of circumstance prompts its music and when the "wind on wind" rushes down you hear the melody of "all his benefits."

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It is the introspective Psalm. The author is talking to himself. There is not a line of prayer in the whole poem. It proceeds as if there had been answers enough to prompt praises. And as if the praises were greatly in arrears, the writer would take himself in hand. He would say, "Soul of mine you are capable, why be so neglectful; I wonder at my own slowness of thanksgiving; come, rise to action. I urge that it must be done, 'my soul bless the Lord.'"

It begins and ends the same. Self-examination and self-exhortation leading to enthusiastic praise are its keynote, and the melody is the melody of "his benefits."

There is argument, great argument supporting all this melody too, for it proceeds to declare that unless one forgets all his benefits, there must be the prompting of praise. And it suggests that the benefits are so all-but-infinite and innumerable that hardly all could be forgotten, and the soul be in the processes of genuine self-examination.

Verse 1. "Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless his holy name."

Note 1. As if a well should call to itself

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for water, or a tree should command its own sap, or the racer should insist upon a more abundant draught of strength and speed from his own resources—strained fairly to the breaking point by the word “O!” Here is enthusiasm for us with the muscles of determination grasping and pulling it on. One seems to hear in the underbreath, the words, “If I say I will, I can.”

Note 2. “Bless his holy name.” The name or reputation is the banner representing the forces behind it. See that banner and from the very prowess it represents you know what to expect. God’s holy name stands for all the resources of infinity. They are too vast for us to grasp in thought, but the name—Jehovah—we can bare our heads, wash our lips, tune our voices and say, or sing, a little of what could not possibly be too much concerning that.

Note 3. “Bless.” Speak well of, exalt, advertise, commend. Where men only gaze, add thou glory.

Note 4. “All that is within me.” This relieves a little the strain begotten by the enthusiasm. Man is capacious. We analyze memory, reason, imagination, will, con-

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science, feelings—and dream about a sixth sense. The Psalmist synthesizes in the word “all.” For what other purpose comparable to that of praise should man possess the powers within him. To do this, to bless the holy name of the Lord is absorbing to the verge of outright fanaticism. Awakening to the consciousness of one’s self, gets one into the neighborhood of consciousness of God. Then “my soul” and “his holy name” soon find each other. And who can become teachably conscious of him without blessing him? The whole continent of our human nature must be as good ground answering back to the sunshine and the shower with harvest and fragrance—all that is within me—there is no room for a spiritual desert.

Verse 2. “Bless the Lord, O my soul and forget not all his benefits.”

Note 1. “Bless the Lord, O my soul.” One more demand upon enthusiasm. Mentally and morally we learn by repetition. There is the call of the perishing for the rope or the ladder, but there is also the call of the exulting for the expression or the jubilant for the shout. That is the dream calling for the

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reality, the dew calling for the shower, the frail child of spring sending its perfume over the cold breast of winter. That is exultation. It perfumes. It glorifies.

Note 2. "Forget not all his benefits." Is it true that "to forget God is to defy him?" The soul has a way of remembrance like the physical appetite. A man may be hungry and be affected keenly by the hunger only to awaken later to the sense that he was hungry. So a man may be offering, praising, blessing when he has no words framed in his thought. The remembrance is like the tide in the ocean, no chains rattle and no whistles blow, but the reality there moves against all ships and all winds irresistibly on its course.

Surely we will forget some of his benefits even while we remember him. But we may not forget all. A minute of murmuring suggests that for the time we really forget all his benefits, not one of the millions given a welcome. That is resisting, that is positive. Forgetfulness is not all passive since God's benefits beg a place of recognition. O soul, bid them welcome, one, two, a thousand, the millions, benefits beyond computation, bene-

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fits given more swiftly than the racer's breath, and as free.

"His benefits." How many? Shall we say innumerable? To do that is but to compliment our easily bounded method of reckoning arithmetic. Where computation ends, infinity begins. "His benefits." What variety? All our senses seem reducable to that of touch. Hence all music-waves touch the ear, all beautiful scenes are brought to us by the light touching the eye, all fragrance is realized by the touch upon the olfactory nerves, all taste at the palate-touch and of course, feeling is realized through the touch. By at least five doors God proposes to carry "his benefits" into our beings most pleasingly.

And the darker and more bitter influences which his love turns into working for our good—these, too, are "his benefits." No trial is permitted to come to his own children, but it is an artist-stroke to conform them "to the image of his son" that they may rank the better in the coming kingdom. "His benefits"—how constant? By day as we toil, by night in our sleep, winter and summer, each breath is one. It would do no

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violence to truth if we might read "Whither shall I flee from thy benefits," as a comment on the text "Whither shall I flee from thy presence?" As this life has not a square inch of territory devoid of his benefits, so no moment tells the time, dropping it forth like a gem from the necklace of eternity, without a benefit.

Verse 3. "Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases."

Note 1. Should we forget all benefits when he forgiveth all our iniquities? His forgiveness is not my act. It takes place in his heart. It comes in at my door from without, even urging its way in. What, though the door open heavily, since the hinges are rusted with the salt of the tears my guilt has caused! He forgiveth all. He proclaims confidence for the convict. There is not a little foot-hold in the old guilt-path where the enemy can gain advantage.. Judicially, it is as if we had always done right.

Note 2. "Who healeth all thy diseases." Forgiven! Then after a moment has passed I am again fainting. The disease is in me and it breaks out and spreads. Forgiveness

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without healing, that is to be tossed into the air only to suffer the thud of the fall again. But forgiveness and healing, that is the elevator well-furnished, and every new elevation we pass shall hear the glad praises in the great words "bless the Lord, bless the Lord O my soul," for each is a window to rich landscapes and far-views. Forgiveness has to do with the court room, but healing with the hospital. Thus free and approved by the government and free from all quarantine, the soul walks at liberty and in health.

Verse 4. "Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with loving kindness and tender mercies."

Note 1. "Who redeemeth thy life from destruction." The thought of redemption carries with it a purchase price. Something was paid. It is destruction to the soul to forget God's benefits, murmur and be thankless. The weakened walls of the ruins of a great building after a fire, do not mean enough to picture such destruction. The symmetry of the character, its strength, its utility, its music are gone. This is antedating hell. But God gave his son to woo us up

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to stability and beauty again. "Bless the Lord, O my soul." To have ruthlessly claimed us, that would be as theft. Such could not be. To have proposed an exchange—a barter, that would have advertised a lack of wisdom, for how poor the trade. But to redeem, to buy us back, that will set the soul at its best singing,

"I'm a child of the King,
I'm a child of his love."

Note 2. "Who crowneth thee with loving kindness and tender mercies."

Antedating Calvary let us say, this is royalty by blood. We belong to the family. Come, my soul, to the coronation. Here is kindness sweetened with love and mercy tendered. Speak not of diamonds and precious stones that a deer might trample upon or a boar swallow. Thy crown is richer than jewels and purer than flowers and sweeter than music and enduring as the God who bestows it. How it flames—yet as restful to gaze upon as it is brilliant. "Loving kindness and tender mercies." Come, then, to the coronation. The ceremonies are for today. It is in the present tense. Shall we

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engage dirges? Nay, let hallelujahs flush out the faintest hint of murmuring and "bless the Lord, O my soul." If ever dethroned entirely, my soul, it would have to be in the tomorrow. God's loving kindness and tender mercies declare thee royal to-day. If thou shouldst be overthrown forever, yet even thine enemies could say truthfully, "once thou hast been crowned."

Verse 5. "Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's."

Note 1. "Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things."

The American revised version renders mouth "desire." Blessed satisfying. Not as though there were nothing greater or sweeter in the future to be desired, but the supply is so gratifying that with it no other supply is sought. "Whoso drinketh of this water shall never thirst." All other draughts shall be discounted when this is being received. This satisfies. And it does not suffocate. It is pleasing. The flavor is agreeable. What he gives is appreciably best.

Note 2. "So that thy youth is renewed

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like the eagle's." O, who will remedy retrogression? To speak of renewing youth is to startle one with the thought of the miraculous.

The mountaineers tell us that the old eagle does that. When with a cumbersome growth upon the beak, he loses his feathers and drags himself limply about, he finds the sharp rock-edge and knocks the false growth off his beak; soon the new feathers appear, the lustre is again kindled in the eyes, his flesh is regained and he plays with the storm in renewed youth.

Unrenewed, the careworn will become care-crushed with age. Every year will increase the pressure. Back then to youth. Knock off the peevish murmuring growths, let the soul's mouth be full and the moral music be given as when without a care in childhood—and bless the Lord. Right by thy faintness is God's strength, and before the breath of murmuring has cooled, the life of praise will prompt its song. Youth of the spirit is renewed by feeding. It is only the starved soul that becomes decrepit.

Verse 6. "The Lord executeth righteous acts, and judgment for all that are oppressed."

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Note 1. "The Lord executeth righteous acts," &c. So the oppressed can always know that active rightness and active right pronouncements, are to their credit with him. Even the oppressed can there find reason for the rapture of praise. What if the latest deed of man seems more unrighteous than the long list of his vengeful doings? What if the galling manacle, or the cracking whip, are used as if almighty resource was behind them, even so—with time—God will make plain his righteous care, and he will prove that as to-day it is chrysalis and to-morrow butterfly, so to-day it may be tears and blood, but to-morrow it will be a "far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

Verse 7. "He made known his ways unto Moses, his doings unto the children of Israel."

"He made known." Ah! if we can but know what he devises and what he is doing, that will be glorious enough to perpetuate the anthems of archangels. Just to learn his order, just to see him do! The singing of no singer, the work of no artist, the hand-grasp of no rescuer would so gratify the

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soul. And he does not hide from us his ways and his doings. Moses and the children of Israel saw them. We have Christ and we are the children of the martyrs. "The meek will he guide in judgment, the meek will he teach his way." (Psalm 25:9). History is a praise-promoter when God is seen through the maze. Examine, for example, the dealings of Jesus with those whom he met in Palestine, and is there one who really sought the right, to whom he meted out treatment which you would not cherish? And, too, even Israel, when obedient, was always prospered.

Verse 8. "The Lord is full of compassion and gracious, slow to anger and plenteous in mercy."

Note 1. The word "compassion" is so encompassing, it seems to say that all weaknesses, all needs, all troubles are within the scope of its helpfulness. Tender mercies flow out to refresh and heal, but compassion surrounds and embraces.

Note 2. There is a difference between a compassionate and a gracious person. The compassion without graciousness might have been prompted as a result of some

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price required or expected. But graciousness (that is free unmerited kindness); so when the Lord is spoken of as being both gracious and compassionate, it would seem that every turn of his providence is an arm of tender helpfulness. Bless the Lord, O my soul.

Note. 3. His is not anger inconsistent with fulness of compassion and graciousness. "Jesus looked around upon them with anger, being grieved for the hardening of their hearts." (Mark 3:5). We call it anger, but we must not get our estimate from the expressions of human, sinful anger. It could never be malice. It is truth which cannot mix with or allow falsehood. It is the love crystal, terrible! It is mercy which will not associate with maliciousness. It is the consuming majesty of greatness in the presence of duplicity, discovered only in contrast, revealed slowly but awfully.

Verse 9. "He will not always chide; neither will he keep his anger forever."

Note 1. He would not chide. The chiding is incidental. The mother would not say nay to the child's cry for sweetments.

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Such a cry will cease when the child gains experience.

This whole verse is a splendid effort at expressing the balance of God's perfect character as seen in providence. He is neither too severe nor too lenient. And this truth is expressed from both sides.

Before chastisement reaches revenge it will be checked, and before reserve reaches neglect, it will administer reproof. No mere influence is ours to deal with, but a living God, whose perfect poise of character is hinted at by the sun in its orbit.

Verse 10. "He hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us after our iniquities.

Note 1. "He hath not dealt." We must deal with him. The man who denies his existence, denies with the breath he gives; and the brain cells and the nerve tracks and the spirit-chamber—all are probably scarred and marred by the act of denial. Could you picture him dealing with us after our sins? Could you say, "When I was false, so was he; when I was base, so was he; when I succumbed, so did he?" Man-made gods as of Greece and Rome were thus, but our God

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has revealed himself the Holy God. We always know where to find him. He did not fall into our way. When we rebelled, he sacrificed. When we sinned, he loved. When we despised, he protected. When we cried, he forgave.

Note 2. He rewarded. As if we had been good! When he took us in, it was to treat us as heroes. We won in his battle. O, how he fought for us while we fought him! Rescue would have been enough, as we see it, but as he views it, reward must be added and family honors divided. "Bless the Lord O my soul."

Verse 11. "For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him."

Note 1. The expression, "fearing the Lord," is made clearer by the words of the 147th Psalm. "The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in them that hope in his mercy." Hoping in mercy rather than hoping in one's own merit, the spirit of contrition rather than of arrogance, a due credit given to our offensiveness and his graciousness—a fear to offend him! Remember this

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great mercy of God is for a specified class of people.

Note. 2. Here is a kind of aggregate dealing with geography and astronomy, which makes one feel like taking his position alternately upon the highest mountain and in the deepest glen on the clearest day, and gazing, and gazing only to conclude the search by saying how high, how very high. So high that no expert among us goes up and comes back to tell the measurement. So great, then, is his mercy toward them that fear him, that none has measured it. If you want to express what you cannot exaggerate, this verse shows you how.

Verse 12. "As far as the East is from the West, so far hath he removed our transgression from us."

Note 1. Note the faint echo of our transgressions, then. Away, far away! Here distance is friendly. Here it is coveted. Blessed is the man who is not homesick for his sins. The East seems out on the hill, but when I get there the sea has it. And the West is in the sunset, but when I have reached the glorified hills, the western sky beyond seems

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boundless. Why should distance be called in to illustrate our freedom from transgressions? Partly, distance here is a question of character. Two persons may be seated in the same room, but they cannot find each other. Morally, they are so far apart that the soul of one cannot bear a message to the soul of the other. One walks in the neighborhood of heaven, the other skirts the edges of hell. A gulf is between them. Their likes and dislikes, their motives and plans make them far, far from bosom friends. The character having changed, the change is such as to place us in the East and the old conditions in the West. So far! And partly also because distance from guilt is exceedingly welcome. In the nation guilt hurts, but in our own family it prostrates. Distance helps. "As far as the East is from the West!" That carries my sins into a different country from the one in which I live. Let another take the end of a measuring line and start out into space eastward while I proceed to journey westward, I will bid him "farewell," for we will never meet again.

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Verses 13, 14, 15, 16. "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust. As for man, his days are as grass; as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more."

Note 1. How much broader and how much deeper can the crystal river made by the confluence of "mercy and compassion and graciousness" become? Pity is the new tributary. Pity for the physical man. Though his iniquities are so far removed from him, yet "the frame"—his, not him—that wearies and sweats and wastes and dies. Pitiful! The nature of angels would not sicken, but man, he falls before he walks, as the flower of the field droops before it blooms. He takes his nourishment from the clods. The grass of the field takes its nourishment hence also. The wind blows hot and the very roots appear as the ground undistinguished. Death blows upon us and the whole room seems empty. The very place seems pathetically eloquent with absentness. But since death can only prey upon the "frame," "bless the Lord, O my soul."

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Verse 17. "But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children."

Note 1. Now for a contrast; grass, flowers, dust, wind on the one hand (verses 14, 15, 16), and upon the other, mercy. First, "Mercy" takes precedence. Before the grass, the flowers, the dust, the wind; from everlasting, mercy has her date. Secondly, "To everlasting." Thus mercy is set forth as wondrous in durability—no lily of a day, no withered grass or scattered dust or vanished wind-gust. The storms cannot beat it down, nor the dusty earth swallow it up. Now and again you see the whirling dust wave ravenous with its majesty, but ever again you may see mercy. Everlasting mercy!

Note 2. Upon them that fear God, mercy rests like sunbeams and air (they "hope in his mercy"), their very life is in it.

Note 3. And here is yet another affluent to that great river which we have been tracing. This time it is righteousness. Mercy, Compassion, Graciousness, Pity, and Righteousness. We must be nearing the sea. Away up yonder in the beginnings we had

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benefits, forgiveness, redemption, and other "good things." Righteousness endures. Hence it is given the company of Mercy. As if to say, I started to speak of Mercy as the enduring grace, but I could not stop there. Mercy flows, but Righteousness measures. No mechanism is so intricate as is the character of "the Lord our Righteousness."

Note 4. "Unto children's children."

Heredity is not more persistent than righteousness.

Verse 18. "To such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his precepts to do them."

Note 1. "His covenant." "His commandments." He will always be true, and he deals with us as rational. Through the mind we grasp the terms of the covenant or contract and the mandates of his will. He reciprocates, hence the covenant or bargain. He dominates, hence the command or precept. It is the same old battle of the tenth verse. He conquers and rewards. First, culprits, then penitents, servants, friends, children of the household, on the throne.

Covenant without command and we would

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be culprits again; the command with the covenant, and we become righteous.

Note 2. "Those that remember." Another tribute to the truth of verse one. To forget his commandments is to break them. They are written upon the tables of the heart. (See Heb. 8:10; 10:16). Obedience to God is to be as the action of the physical heart to the living body. That is paramount, obedience must be, whatever is omitted.

Verse 19. "The Lord hath established his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all."

Note 1. Ah! this compassionate God is a ruler. Politics is also in the Psalm. Verily there is a court room as well as a temple, a throne as well as a father's pity. There it is, covenant, commandment, king. We are taken from the manward up. Every verse of this jubilant Psalm has been a step leading up to him that ruleth. No soul thanks well until it submits well.

Note 2. But O, the grandeur of being a subject to this government! Its headquarters are above the transitory and the dominion is over all. Where deceivers plot and

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devils dare, where storms burst forth and death ravishes, amid temptation, weakness, weariness, error and loss, his kingdom ruleth over all. My enemies coming to capture me missed me at the city's edge, but their horses tramped the snow so that I made the swifter journey over the beaten path. His kingdom ruleth over all. "All things work together for good to those that love God." With him let us covenant.

Bless the Lord, O my soul, for his throne is established and his kingdom so vast. No disruptions shall disturb the security of my heritage. Such a government made secure against all odds to all eternity could not accept me as a really loyal subject unless I am also a subject with a song.

Verse 20. "Bless the Lord, ye angels of his, ye mighty in strength, that fulfill his word, hearkening unto the voice of his word."

Note 1. The "my" of the first verse, must for a season, give way to the "ye" of the twentieth. O for fellowship! Help, help to chant Jehovah's praises. To mention the covenant and the command is to prompt a call upon the angels who fulfill his word to

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help us bless the Lord. If man cannot express it adequately, let the angels hear man's cry, and help.

Note 2. "Hearkening unto the voice." Can they distinguish the tones of the voice better? Does the emphasis of God's voice sweeten the tones of the exultant? To be good praisers, we must be good hearers. Is there aught quite so near spirit as a "still, small voice?" Tender and sweet that voice, softer than an infant's whisper, more musical than heaven's chorus. To hear God will be to praise him. Bless the Lord, O my soul, for angelic company and assistance.

Verse 21. "Bless the Lord all ye his hosts; ye ministers of his that do his pleasure."

Note 1. We are in the resplendent ascension. Having claimed a praise-partnership with the angels, let us now rise and vie with archangel, seraphim, cherubim—all his hosts. They who sang at creation, they who drew aside the curtains of blindness for the prophets of God, they who announced the Messiah to the human, ministered in the wilderness of temptation, were elbowing each other at the threshold when Judas

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writhed under the fresh and fatal bargain and Jesus fell on his face for human sin, they who were at the open sepulchre to proclaim Jesus the Conqueror—all the hosts, all the ministers, either his or ours (ministering spirits), doing his pleasure. That they did while we wrought his sorrow, yet now in the new realm, separated from our iniquities as far as the East is from the West, we call them eagerly to pursue their transcendent mission and bless the Lord with us.

Verse 22. "Bless the Lord, all ye his works, in all places of his dominion: bless the Lord, O my soul."

Note 1. The pure-voiced, the bright, the resplendent, are enlisted. Now let us call to our help the average and the inanimate. They say that a word lives in the effect upon atoms forever. Then can "the works" of God praise him? In the machinery of the universe, is the air vocal? This we know, that if men fail to make jubilee, angels will do it. For, this is to be done in all places of his dominion. Here is a government whose very politics is praise. "Our polity

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begins in the heavens." Begins there; but to encompass it you must sweep a circle which will touch the throne on one side and the cricket, the dandelion, or the diamond with the other, and overflow that circle with praise.

Note 2. But to us (the Calvary-bought), here is a call to missionary triumph. Is his dominion rightful everywhere but in Asia? Should the heart of the Hottentot or of the Malay not thrill with this greatness?

O! it were worth paying to get men to praising. It were worth leaving home and friends. It were worth loneliness and violent death. "The earth is the Lord's." Some places of his dominion are not praiseful. Moroseness, complaining, bestiality, mercilessness, conceit, degradation are there. Come, O come, let us sing it with sacrifice in our hearts and tears in our voices, "Praise him all creatures here below."

Note 3. "Bless the Lord, O my soul." They have heard me speak and sing unto others. Once more let me speak to myself. Perhaps now my soul is better discovered to me than when I began the Psalm. So

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the same words will have greater weight.
Then "Bless the Lord."

For his holy name!

For his benefits!

For forgiveness!

For healing!

For redemption!

For the coronation!

For the sufficiency of good things!

For renewed youth!

For guarding the oppressed!

For the history of his ways!

For his compassion, his graciousness, slowness
to anger and plenteousness in mercy!

For his chastening and judgment!

For his rewards and mercy!

For the distance of my iniquities!

For his fatherly pity, his righteousness!

For his covenant, his commandment, his throne
and his kingdom.

Bless the Lord

For angels and the hosts of heaven!

For his works and his wide dominion, yea, and

For my redeemed soul!

No dissipation shall conclude the Psalm.
Praise is not wearisome. The only recreation suggested here is more praise. The same "bless" and same "O," and the same

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“soul” are in the effort at the last as at the first. After all that has been said, there is more to be offered. The thankless treachery of one’s soul must not be given a moment’s liberty. It must be held to its privilege as if that were its one neglected duty. It must still be called upon to bless the Lord.

In a flowery dell, a herd-boy kept his sheep; and because his heart was joyous he sang so loudly that the surrounding hills echoed back his song. One morning the King, who was out on a hunting expedition, spoke to him and said, “Why are you so happy, dear little one?”

“Why shall I not be?” he answered. “Our King is not richer than I.”

“Indeed!” said the King; “tell me of your great possessions.”

The lad answered: “The sun in the bright blue sky shines as brightly upon me as upon the King. The flowers upon the mountain, and the grass in the valley grow and bloom to gladden my sight, as well as his. I would not take a hundred thousand thalers for my hands; my eyes are of more value than all the precious stones in the world; I have food

Psalm One Hundred and Third

and clothing, too. Am I not therefore as rich as the King?"

"You are right," said the King, with a laugh; "but your greatest treasure is a contented heart. Keep it so. and you will always be happy."

The Germans tells this story and I add it to what has been said already that it may serve as a little stepping-stone upon which we may rise to look back again upon this rich Psalm and say, "Bless the Lord."

CHAPTER TWO

Royal Praise



HERE is an estimate of praise which would lower it and make it neighbor to idleness and an associate of dissipation. Men with that estimate would attend a meeting for the advancement of science, or for the discussion of politics, or for literary debate, and engage heartily in its program. But a praise meeting! That would be for light thinkers and fanatics. That would be a place where the effervescence of enthusiasm would escape to tease thinking people. And with such an estimate, praise is treated as if it were scarcely fit to sweep the back-door yard of a busy life. If it claims for its chariot great strains of music, the listener becomes a voice critic, or an examiner of the tones of an instrument, rather than a praise promoter, or if it should be eloquent, with tears flowing over the silent lips, the listener pronounces upon the softness of the praise offerer. If it should be in a great "hal-

Royal Praise

lelujah" or "glory to God," then surely that is absurdity and extravagance.

The Jewish people had a greater conception of the rank of praise than this. Their Psalmist wrote: "O, Thou who art enthroned upon the praises of Israel." To such praise had royal relation. They were particular, too, about thrones. There was Solomon's throne, a throne of ivory, and overlaid with finest gold approached by six steps leading up from a footstool of gold. The top of the throne round at the back; models of lions guarded (?) the way up. It is a thing of specific mention in the scriptures. (See I Kings 10:19; 2 Chronicles 9:17). And there is a "great white throne" mentioned by John in the Revelation, the symbol of government against which there can be no successful rebellion. Ivory and gold and silver and precious stones, the rarest woods polished and fitted finely; impressive reminders of wealth and power and splendor, pay tribute to the royalty that owns them.

For such thrones there is gathered from the dust, the gold; from the hills there is dug the silver, and precious stones are quarried or

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taken up from the debris. There is ivory from wild beasts, there is wood from the windblast and the rock-edge, and where the light greets the polish the hand of the artisan has almost left life in the structure. Beautiful structures these, and decidedly significant.

But here is a throne built of that which machinery cannot touch, or the hand of flesh polish, nor could cameras take its picture—a throne of praise. We shall not say a throne of music, for it is more than a throne of breath.

Praises will condescend to use the aid of melody and wafts of breath, but thanksgiving really condescends when it accommodates itself to lip-throbs and kindred mediums. Men may thank to be respectable, they may even thank to get even with each other, or from force of habit; but when the heart is really rich enough to GIVE thanks, something is bestowed which is acceptable material for the throne of God.

This is royal business. Giving three cheers for a leader, might only mean three efforts for obtaining a government position, but giving praise unto him who reads the secrets of

Royal Praise

the heart cannot mean less than greatness without policy.

It does not cost us so much effort of imagination to represent God's throne as constructed of the invisible. Ivory and jewel and polished wood would waste away, but God is eternal. And praise is undying. Once praise has been quarried from thy heart and given grateful expression, the eternities will refuse to admit that it can ever perish. Of this, then, the Psalmist pictures the Eternal building his throne. As for the material thrones, artists and artisans wrought upon them.

They studied, they sweat, they wept, they wearied. But it was an investment for royalty. What if we should so strive to make our thankful lives enthrone our God! Think of the toiler working upon the throne of David and suffering pain from a little chip of marble in his eye, saying, in an under-breath, "What of the pain? This is the King's throne."

Now we are to crystalize the very drippings of the heart-love for the throne which we build, and with these, without the aid of any kind of machinery, save as we accept the

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wind or stringed instrument as a sort of ballast to our ascending effort, we build and burnish the throne of Jehovah.

Men's efforts upon great structures built of perishable material, have been celebrated; and so might we be celebrated, had we wrought upon the throne of some monarch. But to build upon this throne, is to be elevated to eternal honor.

Let us not condescend to formal songs, or light and trifling exhibitions of bright musical ability, for we are to "sing unto the Lord." Every song is to be an imperishable section of the throne. The One Hundred and Eleventh Psalm closes with the statement, "His praise endureth forever." Is it not encouraging to think that we may build beyond the reach of the fire, the flood and the decay? The high praises of God, like kind words, "can never die."

Thus praise is very far removed from lightness of thought and fanaticism. It is at the foundation of government, it is the undergirding of the symbol of authority. It is at the foundation of legislation, a power enduring, a tribute mighty, God's symbol of supremacy—a throne.

Royal Praise

“O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness and for his wonderful works to the children of men!” “Bless the Lord, all ye his hosts, ye ministers of his that do his pleasure!” “Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord!” “In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God!” “In everything, give thanks!” “We are bound to give thanks always!” “Praise the Lord, call upon his name, declare his doings among the people!” “Bless the Lord, O my soul!” “O Lord, I will praise thee!” “I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth!” “Thanks be unto God, who giveth us the victory!” “Thou art my God, and I will praise thee.” “O God, my exceeding joy!”

CHAPTER THREE

Thanksgiving



LUSIVE thanksgiving!
Who really has it? Who
is brave enough to allow
this music to actually
start up in his soul, when
he knows so well that any
moment the fright in the storm may bury all
its melody under a fog of complaining and
worry. And blanketed Thanksgiving is too
cold to breathe. Who can speak this grace?
When it seeks for words it soon gives up the
quest and tears become its language.

“But far on the deep there are billows
That never shall break on the beach;
And I have heard songs in the silence
That never shall float into speech;
And I have had dreams in the valley
Too lofty for language to reach.”

Too often our gratitude is a little pocket-book affair. We open the purse and bid others look in. “My silver and my gold behold!” Some see the shining, and covet the contents of the purse, but that encompasses

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the scope of their interest. One little piece is taken forth and handed to an unfortunate one and the memory of the act is made bright with the pictures of his smile. The recipient's gladness is apparent, but the purse is yet ours. The most of its contents is yet ours, too. The recipient will soon spend the little gift. Some day it will all seem so little. Would you really see a splendid contrast? Then there is something in opening the purse, tipping it bottom-side up over the lap of the needy one, and seeing the coin tumble as you turn the purse inside out and shake it, yes, shake it. Ah, then we have really severed the contents from the purse, and they have been given. That is an out-turned, out-right giving. That is the Thanksgiving cherishable. The open, out-flowing, forthgoing, Thanksgiving, as if the very soul would be out-turned and given, too. The little "thank you," "many thanks," "much obliged," snaps like the opening and shutting of the purse, on occasion. Who said that was thanksgiving? What bills will purse-snappings pay? If we really have the thanks and then give, that will be Thanksgiving.

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But thanks will be exacting. Thanks will give tears for its token of devotion, and the hair of the head, rather than a soiled skirt, for a towel; and if there are only two mites then they will be devoted, and you will see the seams in the purse next moment.

And we can do this. This autocratic grace is a perfect law observer. God has made us capable of it, and he has bidden us, possess it. Hence it is a child of obedience. It would serve us. Should it rule us, its very strictest rule is also fondest service. When does man appear so completely above all oppressive laws as when genuinely thankful. And yet there are few proofs of his strict obedience to law more evident than when he is able, in everything, to give thanks, for this is the will of God. Where law originates, there Thanksgiving is most prized.

How safe this mighty charm! It actually works no injury. There is no stain in its touch. There is no blast in its breath. You cannot keep company with it in too hidden a place, or in a place too public, for you are bidden, "in everything, to give thanks." It will work no mischief toward you, any moment, night or day, for "we are bound al-

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ways to give thanks." You will work easier and better. You will rest sweeter and safer. You will be insured against ten thousand heartaches and regrets, confusions and distresses, if you will give congenial recognition to this grace, for then you will "not forget all his benefits."

How real! If it lives, it must be heard from. Death to it is annihilation. You cannot, with a microscope, find its corpse. And not one of its former friends would be willing to spend a thought to bury it, if it could be found. Dream not, dear reader, that you may have dead gratitude lying about. With this grace, it is either life or extinction.

But reach out and let go. Be as a waive offering, or a 'mounting' eagle. Nor linger on the little billow-shirred island, with your spirit spilling over the narrow place at every point of the compass. Do thankfully. Speak thankfully. Look thankfully. Feel thankfully.

In respect to what grace or attainment or realization are we so placed upon our own resources as in respect to gratitude. We do not very clearly perceive God as thankful.

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Let it not bewilder us to say so, for God cannot be a penitent, and we readily accept that God cannot lie, though men have been commonly guilty of the latter and the former is among their privileges. To whom would God give thanks?

The vision of an intercommunication in the Godhead, which makes room for thankfulness, there seems real only as we think of Jesus in his voluntary humiliation giving thanks for bread and announcing his gratitude in the words, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." This intercommunication in the Godhead is in itself a fascinating study.

Jesus says that he does always the things pleasing to the Father, also that the Holy Spirit would not speak from himself, but whatsoever he should hear, that should he speak; he also makes the statements to the effect that the Father should be glorified in the Son, and that the Spirit searcheth the deep things of God. What gracious intercommunication these statements represent! Indeed the language of the Seventeenth of

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John's Gospel represents a great wealth of intercommunication between the Father and the Son, ascribing, you remember, that intercommunication, back to the period before the world was. So there may be thanksgiving between the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost, in the Godhead. But while God's exercise of love and joy and peace stand forth in every-day-like thought with us, we cannot say that in the same sense gratitude can be attributed to him.

Aside from this, we can readily say of God, that he can be obedient to his own laws, and we can represent him even as being glorified, but not so readily as being thankful. We are interrupted with the thought, to whom would he give thanks? To whom is he indebted? Gracious he is, and infinitely appreciative, but to whom would the All-Resourceful and All-Sufficient be grateful?

It appears that gratitude is peculiarly a creature's possibility. This quality represents our territory. God will receive it, but we can devote it.

He will prompt it, he will inspire, and then he will welcome it, but we give it. For peace, we may draw upon our God, saying,

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"Give me thy peace." For love, for joy, for power and much else, we may do the same, but for thanksgiving we appear more nakedly responsible.

There is a remarkable wealth of endowment represented by the capacity of man to give thanks. The very capacity to thank, of itself, represents great honor. Thought will be worked to weariness, and heart-searching will penetrate into the very nooks and crevices of the secret inner-man, before we can begin to explain why a creature so given to pervert this capacity into complaining and reproaching, and even deriding, should be entrusted with such a capacity from the Giver of innumerable mercies. Why? Save that he is responsible for using the gift solely to "give thanks," and "in everything to give thanks," and "give thanks always," and "abounding in thanksgiving," as the Scripture announces.

We may plead helplessness in our need of purity; we may cry weakness in our need of power, but when we speak of gratitude, the "I will give it" means something more than the "I will be pure," or "I will be strong." "In that day thou shalt say, O

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Lord, I will praise thee. The door to gratitude seems nearer the "I will" of man, than the door to peace or joy.

But once the peace or joy, the purity or the strength be received, and as a result of their presence (our "I will" paralleling God's will), gratitude will perfume the whole extent of the paralleled will with God's, as surely as that he has made man capable of it. More meaning than that commonly realized may be found in the first sentence of the First Chapter of Isaiah, where he writes, "Thou shalt say, O Lord, I will praise thee." The force of that "I will" reveals a remarkable compliment to man.

It appears that the fresh gratitude of the heart of the new convert from heathenism is beyond description. Indeed, there are not wanting many illustrations of real gratitude on the lower plane from the heathen themselves. Dr. Gaynor, after twelve years' experience in China as a missionary, tells of a Government official who came four times a year during four consecutive years, a considerable distance, just to thank her for having ministered to his wife. Dr. Gaynor says that if he had come but once or twice, it

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might not have so significantly shown forth gratitude, but the repetition of the expression extending over so long a time, revealed conclusively that he was deeply thankful.

That is a heathen's gratitude.

This same missionary tells of a convert's gratitude. A woman, sixty years old, was brought to the hospital with a fractured limb. After Dr. Gaynor had put it in a plaster-of-paris cast and the patient had sufficiently recovered to be sent home, she said to her, "Now some day when I come to my country appointment, I will call and take the plaster-of-paris cast off, and then perhaps you will come over to the meeting and testify of the Lord's great goodness to you." To the missionary's great surprise, when she approached the mud chapel the following week, she observed a crowd near the place, and wondered whether it could be a riot, or what could be the reason for the assembling of the throng.

Coming nearer she discovered that this woman, who had been in the hospital, was preaching Christ to the crowd. She had walked part way with the plaster-of-paris cast on her limb and had ridden a donkey

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the rest of the distance, and so preached Christ and gave praise for his goodness to her, that the missionary did not preach that day, but proceeded to gather the results of the convert's testimony.

A Gospel that has sight for the blind, healing for the sick, pardon for sin, newness of life and the fulness of God, resurrection for the dead, heirship to an enduring kingdom, fellowship with Christ and eternal glory, in its record, and all purchased with blood, and given freely, surely such a Gospel would be a travesty, if those who accept it are not known by their thanksgiving and thanksgiving.

In the presence of the appeal and provisions of such a Gospel, thankfulness or its opposite is the thermometer by which the spiritual temperature is ascertained. Should not the witness of your gratitude be as public as the crucifixion of Jesus? Why should it be less public? "The trees of the Lord are full of sap," "The river of the Lord is full of water," you are called to "a full reward," and it is yours to be "filled unto all the fulness of God." Then answer upon receiving. Respond to the abundance (aye, the super-

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abundance). Let the eye look the response; let the lips speak it; let the heart pour it out. Thankfulness! Sufficient is being bestowed to keep us ever thanking. Claim each moment as a shrine at which praise is offered. Let doxologies chase each other with swift haste. Even so, they cannot keep pace with the blessings.

Ah, Christian, we need the triumphant note, the breath of health, the jubilant overcoming habit. But to really have that, we must have thankfulness. To attempt such exalted living without thankfulness, is to make us boastful, haughty, self-asserting and offensive. But when gratitude, fanned by Christian love, is strong in the soul, the very triumph of such life will inspire the fearful and the oppressed on every side.

No man is ever quite so manly as the thankful man.

One of the great incidents related in John Wesley's religious experience was a conversation with the porter of Oxford College. The man called at Mr. Wesley's room late one evening, and said that he wished to talk with the young student. After they had conversed together for awhile, Mr. Wesley,

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in a spirit of pleasantry, told the porter to go home and get another coat. The man replied. "This is the only coat I have in the world, and I thank God for it." "Go home and get your supper," remarked Wesley. "I have had nothing to-day but a drink of water, and I thank God for that," was the reply. "It is late, and you will be locked out, and then what will you have to thank God for," said Wesley. "I will thank him," responded the porter, "that I have the dry stones to lie upon." "John," said Wesley, "you thank God when you have nothing to wear, nothing to eat and no bed to lie upon. What else do you thank God for?" "I thank him," returned the poor fellow, "that he has given me life and being, and a heart to love him, and a desire to serve him." Wesley stated afterward that the interview revealed to him something in religion to which he had been a stranger.

CHAPTER FOUR

Grateful Sleep



F the balancing of life with toil and rest, with wakefulness and sleep, it would be impossible to adequately speak. Toil is one of God's very best gifts, but sleep precedes it, and makes it possible in human life. It also succeeds it, and without its baptism, toil would soon become a castaway.

"The ship was covered with the water, but he was asleep." (Matthew 8:24). Was not Jesus a good sleeper? I suppose that the frightened people shouted, and the ropes and chains were thrown here and there, and the boat's timbers cracked, but he was asleep. With nothing to worry over, knowing that three words, "peace be still," would prevent a wreck, he slept on until his disciples awakened him, but not with such a refined delicacy as my mother employed when she awakened me in childhood days. She never shouted me awake. No slamming of doors

Grateful Sleep

or rattling of stove pipes, sounded the awakening hour. She approached the bed, and almost in a whisper said, "Come, my son." There is no custom other than the custom of prayer, in my mother's life, that so abides with me as her method of awakening me.

But these men display no such refinement in their method of awakening Jesus. Frightened and wanting in faith, they call out, "Carest thou not?" Yes, he cared, but there was no need of anxiety. The waves would cuddle down at his wooing, and the winds would hide away at his signal.

Why may not many a nervous one take Jesus for a sleep-inducer? He promises "rest." He commands us to live without anxiety. To think of him and pillow one's self upon his constancy and love, should chase away many a sleepless hour.

"He giveth to his beloved in sleep. (Psa. 127:2). There is a larger sleeping. It is so much more than to lie down weary, and after hours have passed, to awaken hungry. There is a going to the treasury of God's keeping, God's renewing, God's giving—a rich, sweet, lovely sleep.

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"In our sleep we are somewhere between two worlds. We cannot tell where we are. It is a hint of the Infinite. It is the beginning of immortality. Our hearing is then at the best. We are close to God, close to liberty." The awakenings of conscience, the whispers of good things given in sleep, we fail to duly credit. I have met several people who have gone to sleep, exhausted with their pleading and agony, who have awakened with the clear witness of peace.

"If he sleep he shall do well." (John 11:12). The most ordinary consideration will consent to the compliment paid to the "sweet restorer" in general. The taking of rest in sleep, makes us all take something, while we do not know that we are taking it. Physical refreshing is at its cheapest price there. If our precious friends "sleep" while we remain awake, it is but a few hours until the morning. Then they will resurrect. But if they die, how long seems the time. We cannot tip-toe our way up to the couch and see them then.

O, death is so desolating. But sleep is so enrichening.

A great part of Jacob's distinction was

Grateful Sleep

gained while asleep. What of this brother of ours sleeping in the open and seeing a ladder stretching from heaven? (Gen. 28: 12). A dream? Yes, a dream, but after the dream he is a seer. The mentioning of the ladder is subjugated; he says, "The Lord is in this place." The Lord had made a ladder while he slept, and had slanted its form against Jacob's memory, where angels had established a kind of dream depot. That ladder is suggestive of a later ladder, when men might "see the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man." A ladder more direct than a lane of stars or an airline of world systems! Behold! it was all a sleep-gift.

"As he slept, behold an angel touched him." (I Kings 19: 5). To the very foot of the ladder this angel came. The vision has come down out of the air. And Elijah has an angel-touch. Little wonder that the poets classify the baby's smile in sleep with the angel-touch. God performed a creative operation upon Adam while he was in a deep sleep, which has resulted in the mothering of the whole stricken race of humanity. He touched him deeply, but the result touches

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us more deeply than strong words can tell. He sends angels, too, it appears, to touch up the workmanship of his own hands while the creature sleeps.

"Thou shalt lie down and thy sleep shall be sweet." (Prov. 3:24). May it be so. Many people appear to have lost the art of lying down. The head is in strained relation to the muscles that hold it. Listening for burglars, expecting a storm, fearing an earthquake, or nervous lest he die before he wake, the weary one fails to really snug to the pillow. To such, let me offer a lullaby. It is this: "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty." Using proper observation so as not to be foolhardy, go in to thy rest, lie down, and if thy room be on the second-story; rest, willing to be found in the basement "safely kept," if the floor goes through. "He that keepeth thee will neither slumber nor sleep."

What of those who are deformed or diseased, and cannot lie down? Do we not know that on every hand these recline in sweetest peace? Few pictures of peace have been given to me like that of a woman in a hospi-

Grateful Sleep

tal, who for seven years, had been in a sitting posture, but her face glowed as she spoke of rest, and told me that in heaven she would live on Hallelujah Avenue.

"Yes," said a blind and deformed sufferer in Philadelphia, "the last thing I ever saw was the motto at the head of my bed. Sister hung it there. Can you see it?" Then I read the motto—"My grace is sufficient for Thee."

"Thy sleep shall be sweet." Sweeter far, I hope, as thou dost consider how "He so giveth to his beloved in sleep."

Having so slept by night, how could we go forth in the glory of the morning's resurrection without Thanksgiving? Surely before the dust of the day's journey has become perceptible to the fresh new life of the day, our souls will harmonize a doxology. There is a good reason to thank God for sleep and even for affliction. Who can sleep, as a Christian should sleep, without awaking with a song of praise. For we did not get back again to a morning as if returning to the same station from which we started the day before. We are further on. We have reached a new depot in immortality. We

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are up the heights where fresh scenery is to be viewed. What should hinder the heart from its fountain-flood of admiration for the scenery or the shout of grateful appreciation? And a day started with a doxology is well begun. That song will down a thousand arguments and surmount ten thousand difficulties. Man can sing down (and intelligently sing down) what he cannot philosophize down.

Christian sleep ended with Christian thanksgiving, and beginning a day of Christian victory, such a rest will help give power to the music of the anthem of life.

CHAPTER FIVE

Did Adam Give Thanks?



THE book of Genesis does not record that Adam, our first parent, really uttered a word of thanks. But the record of the man is short. There is room for much that is not mentioned, and there is safe evidence upon which to calculate some things about Adam which are not stated.

Sin and its cure is the great message for man in the Bible, and the blackness of Adam's sin has one great relief, and that is the pledge of redemption—"Thou shalt bruise the serpent's head." Man is written out very much a failure, after sin enters into the record. The story almost announces despair for all before it is finished. Between the fall and the flood, one could see the chasm easier than the bridge. And is it not true that beneath every sentence in this early record, there is a throbbing of haste. It seems to say, "Tell as little as will do. Reduce speech to the minimum. Man is here; man has

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fallen; man is redeemed; onward to his complete deliverance as promptly as possible."

Time is not taken to record a single note of outright, plainly-stated thanksgiving in the first man's history. Did he possess the spirit of thanksgiving?

Almost surely! And especially before the fall.

I. He was made in the image of God. That, according to Paul in Ephesians 4:24 and Colossians 3:10, suggests righteousness, true holiness and knowledge. Of these, the first two of themselves suggest thanksgiving. For we must reckon that Adam was a man of righteousness and true holiness before sin had entered into his character, and if righteousness, after sin has entered into the character, shall prompt a man to thanksgiving, how much more surely would this grace in Adam's character prompt him to like conduct before sin had dethroned his manhood.

II. After the fall we trace, with greater difficulty, the paths in the labyrinth to find an open way for the expression of gratitude in Adam. God hath made man upright, but now he declines. We suggest that when Eve

Did Adam Give Thanks?

named her firstborn "Cain," she may have meant by that name to recognize God as the giver of her son, and in that, there seems to be some expression of thanksgiving on her part, but did Adam share it? We think that animals slain for the skins with which Adam and Eve were dressed, were probably slain for sacrifice, and that this best explains the Lord's distinguishing between the offering made by Cain and that of his brother Abel. It also brings us to the fingertips of human sin and redemptive effort. But in sacrifice, the idea may rather be that of expiation than of gratitude; hence we gain but little here on the subject of thanksgiving to the credit of Adam.

Perhaps the most encouraging statement, after the fall, is that made by Adam in Genesis 2:23, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh." All other creatures which had passed before him to be named were unsuitable to him, but God had made a "help-meet" for him, and when she came forth formed out of himself, he looked upon her and says, "This is congenial; this I appreciate." Was he then thankful?

Who could forbid the assertion of an inter-

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est almost great enough to be a wish, that the record had included one (if but one) statement of thanksgiving in the life of Adam? How splendid to have read that Adam said, "Glory to God!" But then, perhaps, our gratitude would have been ever pitiable and astonishingly less than it is. A look at the life in which no positive word of thanks is given, warns us not to repeat the record. We might wish proudly to elevate the estimate men generally put upon their race, but it is to be feared that such pride would decrease the general fund of thanksgiving.

Adam knew the use of the word "afraid" and "tempted," but did he in his sin know the use of the word "hallelujah"? Did the night have one star? Was the soul's debt at least admitted, or was it steadily ignored?

III. We cannot say that Adam was incapable of gratitude after sin entered into his experience. Capable of distinguishing, we know he would be, hence capable of criticising and complaining. If he can depreciate, he can also appreciate. How much would such a man appreciate a gift? Enough to want it? Yes, and enough to take it and use it

Bid Adam Give Thanks?

and even be pleased with it, yet possibly not enough to utter a word, or realize one prompting to thanksgiving heaving his breast. Even though pleased with the gift, you might expect to hear one complain that it is not greater, or that more gifts like it are not at hand.

Thank God, it appears that Adam and all responsible people since his day, have been entrusted with the possibility of giving thanks, but since the record does not state that he ever did give thanks after he became a sinner, surely all his successors should unite as if to make up that in which he was deficient, and with overflowing hearts "in everything give thanks."

Eagerly and swiftly we fly to the heart of the second Adam, our Lord and Saviour. Here is the record of thanks. "After that he had given thanks," is accepted as one of the tributes to his established custom. The majesty of the first phrase of the book of Genesis, "In the beginning, God," might also well have for its associate his words, "I thank thee, O Father." The honor of the race has been redeemed, but its tokens are delivered not from the hands of the Adam

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who hid behind the trees, but from this One who was extended upon the tree. Henceforth write Thanksgiving with crimson.

CHAPTER SIX

The Rank of the Ingrate



HAT will not men, at their worst, dare each other to do? The way downward seems to have no terminus. The pit of the wicked is bottomless.

Men have competed to prove who could eat the most, or drink the most, or even swear the most. Perhaps if we could see life from the upperside, many a day would suggest that the people are competing to see who could be the most unthankful. Can it be?

Hear the complaining. The night, the day; the cold, the heat; the wind, the calm; the rain, the drought; the field, the barn; the path, the house; the food, the appetite—these, and all else, are made the subjects of the ungrateful murmur. Murmuring becomes so habitual, that when an inquiry is made concerning one's health, the answer is, "O, I can't complain." Does that answer mean "I would complain if I dare," or does it mean, "I can't complain, and of course I

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won't give thanks." The farmer is told that his oats look thrifty; he answers that they are struck with the rust. "His wheat will surely yield well," but he replies that the straw is short. "But his orchard is full of fruit," yet he declares that most of the apples are under-size and worm-eaten. Does he not know that all this harvest is a gift as surely as if it dropped from the sky ready for the ingathering?

By experimenting, the theory has been made quite acceptable that the grains and fruits come to us on account of the nutriment received from the air in far greater proportion than from the nutriment extracted from the earth. What if all wheat would fail to sprout? What if all grasses should cease growing? What if all trees should refuse to bud? And is this ingratitude the response given for the abundance and the prodigal variety of God's gifts in field and orchard, in the wilds of the tropics and the garden of the temperate zone?

We may say safely that, if men should really want to compete to see who could be the greatest ingrate, the field for winning is open to-day. Is there danger that some one in

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America now enters it? The very possibility of such a distinction makes us shudder.

Nevertheless, in his address at the World's Student Volunteer Convention in Toronto, Mr. Robert E. Speer said, that "The deposits in the National banks alone in the United States for a year, exceeded the offerings of Great Britain, Germany, Canada and the United States to Foreign Missions in one hundred and seventy years. Of those four lands, only one thirty-five-hundredths of their wealth is given to Foreign Missions, and less than one one-hundred-and-seventy-fifth of their income, and if the Protestant Christians of the United States had given one-tenth of their savings for the year, it would have multiplied their gifts twelve hundred per cent.

What child could ever be so unthankful for a good mother, as the child of to-day? My mother, and all good mothers, have contributed to my well-being. They all lived for me. Moses, nor Samuel, nor Ruskin, nor Knox, nor Wesley could share so vastly in this as you and I. Every mother's prayer, every mother's good advice, toil, patience and love, has added somewhat to the possi-

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bility of my greater appreciation or of my greater ingratitude.

What person could ever be so unthankful for information? Every prophet, or seer, or teacher has contributed to your welfare and mine. Sodom had never seen nor heard what came to Chorazin. Chorazin had no such advantages as those accorded us. Prophets and kings desired to see the things we see and to hear the things we hear. Their desire was unfulfilled. It is ours to have in the hut what the king could not get in the palace. Moses gave the law, but we have "grace and truth."

Who could so lightly regard redemption as we? Our Savior's offering was indeed all-sufficient and no merit could ever increase its efficiency. But with what reality it all appears, when we see it lifted up by the bleeding, blistered hands of martyrs, or carried forth by the diligence of those who declare that they are crucified with him? Stephen and Paul and Dorcas and all the galaxy of martyrs, including foreign missionaries, faithful unto the martyr's death; all whose hearts cry, "In the cross of Christ I glory," give to you and me the opportunity to depre-

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ciate or else gratefully recognize redemption more than the men and women of yesterday. They have been God's messengers to bring it closer to our vision, and the nearer we get to the cross the more worthy our appreciation it appears.

We are where the wealth converges. All days seem to pour their good meanings into your day and mine. Surely if one were to resolve to compete for rank as an ingrate, his opportunity is now at hand. Every moment of time seems to add a step to the steps downward.

With this consideration, it would seem as thankless now to murmur at the weather as in Moses' day it would have been to blaspheme at the base of Sinai; now by refusing to give thanks for food, one would seem as gross as in the first century a man would have been, who smote with his fist the brow of the Apostle John.

Who could bear to go alone and lock himself up, and then be compelled to admit that he is the greatest aggregation of ingratitude (according to capacity) among all the sons of men from creation down? Such would be the meanest meanness. Yet (we repeat) it is

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possible that some one lives to-day of whom that is true. If it is possible, God forbid that it remain probable.

Where is Christendom's appreciation of the Gospel? Certainly not in her gifts of money or material things, nor in her testimonies. How many of her millions propose to dole out the unmissed gift or to speak so conservatively that an unaccustomed listener would think them trying to make out a case for a failing enterprise, or seeming to introduce an intruder, whose manners would be risky and whose fitness to be received is open to grave questioning. Where are the people who feel ill at ease to have so much money or substance on hand? Where are the witnesses, the exhorters, the praise offerers, who glory in the Lord's cross clear beyond the apologetic and cold doled-out endorsement; those who take up with holy boasting. That brand of religion which passes as unthankful Christianity must be rated as a make-believe. Either the Gospel would be a hoax, or the experience is a fraud, or man is not worth what has been invested in him, or else jubilant thanksgiving must find its congenial place in the heart of

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the professor of saving faith in Jesus.. We get all too much accustomed to things. We take diamonds with which to stone rats, we scrub the floors with tapestry. We take the things of grace, over which angelic enthusiasm has broken out into song, and talk coldly of their relations and characteristics. We would not sign our names to the declaration, but maybe the inmost heart does, nevertheless declare "Christ does not love us so." "We were not so sinful." "The gospel is not so esesntial." "We could have done very well in our own way." Thus we would make the Christian plan an exaggerated humbug. Once let the real be real to the soul, and the gifts and the witness must find expression. Then Gratitude will hatch.

Mr. John R. Clemens' wonderful combination of compliment and rebuke, encouragement and self-searching, reads,

"Somebody made a loving gift,
Cheerfully tried a load to lift;
Somebody told the love of Christ,
Told how his will was sacrificed:
Was that somebody you?"

Our age is characterized as the brotherly age, the busy age, the progressive age, the

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scientific age. Rich beyond the significance of these, would be the Thanksgiving age. A race of brotherly ingrates, or busy ingrates, or progressive or scientific ingrates, that would be so great a failure that every adjective of the group would intensify its defect.

"It is reported that the United States' Dead Letter Office received, in a single year, thousands of letters from children addressed to Santa Claus, but that during many months following the Christmas, only one letter was received which bore a message of thanks to Santa Claus." Are the children schooled to compromise their character in these days of plenty?

Doubtless the little children are the very last to merit just censure on account of ingratitude. We know how very hearty is the thanks of thankful children, but with the children of plenty, whose food is abundant and luxurious, whose clothing is so often new and so elegant, and whose homes are so comfortable, with pictures of the more splendid, ever beckoning them on, it is very easy for covetousness to strike down its strong roots and flourish wide and high its

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great poison-laden branches. Manifestly, covetousness must be placed at the very opposite to thankfulness. But the real idolatry of covetousness appears to be in that it represents a consent of its captive to place the perishable, and therefore the disappointing, where only the eternal and therefore sufficient could lawfully be placed.

With Jesus, the giving of thanks for a lunch in the open, appears to have been a custom; but with us, so often, the person of plenty appears to be so consumed with how he earned or saved or speculated or inherited more than another, that he is to lavish new indulgences upon his selfish soul just because his table is a thing of bounty and luxury. Jesus, let us remember, started in a manger, and owned and freely gave the wealth of Life and Light. He was too scientific to take even a handful of food just as a matter of course. He was too practical to feed the stomach at the expense of character, and he was too religious to be atheistic over corn and figs. "After that he had given thanks, he brake the bread." He who taught people to request daily bread from God, was himself the example of gentlemanly gratitude for it.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Gospel Thanksgiving



N mentioning the fruit of the Spirit, Paul does not include Thanksgiving. Nevertheless Thanksgiving properly accompanies every one of the graces mentioned in the fruit-list. Thanksgiving for Love, for Joy, for Peace, for Long-suffering, for Gentleness, for Goodness, for Fidelity, for Meekness, for Self-control—a thanksgiving which, in the midst of such fruit in such variety, is equivalent to a continuous harvest-home-shout of praise. Thanksgiving has for long ages had a way of expressing itself in tokens and acts of helpfulness.

One boy, in a family of eight children, was noted for bringing tokens from the woods to his mother. A bouquet, a snail-shell, an abandoned bird's nest or a bright-colored stone served his purpose. The other children loved her and were thankful, but this boy excelled in the art of expressing gratitude by bringing a gift. Ever since Abel brought

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his offering to be accepted of God, the bringing of a gift has been recognized among men as an exalted method of expressing gratitude. Among the Jewish people, the burnt-offering was a thank-offering. Also on the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles, the people's appreciation of the showers was signified by the ceremony of the pouring forth of water from the golden pitcher. By various and repeated tokens, they symbolized their thanks.

That God should accept of gifts as tokens of gratitude, is another proof of his great benevolence. They are his things, the gold, the flock, the fruit, they are all his, and we may gather them up (our touch converting them into what we call our own), and place them in the hands of this person or that, to find them accepted of God as our gift expressing our thanks. Whether we gave it to those who appreciate it or to those who scorn it, He accepts it as given to him. The gratitude is the basis of reckoning with him, the article given was the symbol of that. Small and poor may have been the soul, in dark skin or white, in poverty or sickness, free or in prison, to whom the token

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is bestowed; he proclaims, "Ye did it unto me." How God could trust man to be recognized on earth as a giver, seems to be the greatest expression of boundless condescension. One would think that such distinction must be reserved exclusively for himself. That he should require, for distinct uses, certain fractions of a man's material resources and time (the tithe, the Sabbath, &c.), is to be expected, but that he should allow us to bestow certain things as gifts of gratitude, that is honor lavished. We honor the thing we choose as a conveyor of our thanks. We honor the person to whom it is given. We are honored in the act, and he honors us with the privilege of its execution and adds a reward for our doing it. Surely here is a glimpse at God's exceeding goodness toward man. Shall we offer gifts? "It is better to give than to receive." They speak of breaking down bridges with music, but when the music of gratitude from the soul shifts goods from this place to that, it is almost spiritualizing the material—it verges creation because of the newborn character it produces. "He that desireth a gift is not wise," but he that giveth a grateful

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gift, is revelling in the higher mysteries of intelligence. He touches and affects laws which are at the genesis of things. The "cup of cold water" thus given may so strike the spiritual motor in the soul of the one receiving, as to set the machinery of the soul turning out fresh gratitude in return, until, like the poor saints in Jerusalem, of whom St. Paul speaks, the gifts from the grateful abound unto the thanksgiving to God of those who receive them. The grateful gift produced the grateful heart, it "was twice blessed."

So may it be with the community for whose Christian welfare you devote money. So may it be in the heathen land, as your thanksgiving in meekness is expressed in your gifts. The ocean becomes the bridge over which the thanksgiving of the heathen convert and of your heart, meet to ascend acceptable to God. The material becomes transmitted into greatness of character, and the gratitude rises as incense to Heaven.

The deeply thankful heart will fairly ransack the earth to procure more and better gifts with which to symbolize his thanks. No chemical or astronomical or geological

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or botanical study, no rowing of boats or pitching of balls or breaking of colts or running of autos or fishing in streams, could produce such delight as does the privilege of bestowing goods to be the tokens of his gratitude.

In olden times, altars were built and dedicated to God in grateful recognition of his deliverances, and in modern times, men give money as a tribute of thanks on account of the recovery of a sick child's health or the success of an enterprise. The stones in the ancient altar were significant of man's good intention, but the gifts to orphanages, hospitals, missions and the like, build into visible representations a tribute unto God. To bestow money or construct buildings, or send a bouquet, or watch by the sick, or take a journey as an expression of gratitude, is to accept that man can share what God alone is worthy to receive.

True gratitude will act. To it, the responsibility of expending money and time and strength in behalf of aged parents, is no "corban." What else, save love, could be so unwearied? What else, we repeat, so en-

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tertaining or so associated with hilarity. To transmute a flock of sheep into an anthem of praise ascending from the heart of orphaned children, by giving the money received from the sale of the sheep to bring the orphans to know Jesus Christ, what entertainment could produce such hilarity? It is not that one feels he owes the things to other people, so much as that his gratitude gives him the fascination of impressing them into its use and changing their location, that more gratitude may result. It is the pastime of nobility, the sacrificial holiday, the game of glory, well pleasing to God.

Give, give, give!
The sky gives, and the sea;
The fields their offering bring,
The orchards fruit, the birds sing—
They give perennially.

Give, give, give!
God's fish are fresh and great;
Loaves gives He, large and sweet,
And two-yolked eggs for meat,
The throngs to satiate.

Give, O give!
God's heart is beaming down
Infinite mercy, free

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For all—for you, for me—
His lavished gifts to crown.

Give, yea give!
His gifts to Him transpose!
Be like your God. Bestow!
Joy as your givings go,
A healing balm for woes.

Give, still give!
With your receipts so vast,
Unlock your cribs and banks!
Both give and live your thanks;
Abroad your bounties cast!

Give, ay give!
It will return to you.
Your souls with greater store,
Full-armed, will give the more
The deathless ages through.

It is related that after J. Hudson Taylor had given a few years to his great work of faith in inland China, he was spending a birthday at home with his family, when his little five-year-old daughter entered his room, and speaking some simple words of congratulation, proceeded to hand him her token of regard. It was indeed a peculiar gift. The child had made it with her own hands. A piece of pasteboard had been cut broad at one end and sharp at the other. In the center she had

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made a hole where she could place the end of a burnt match, the other end of which she had capped with a thimble. This birthday gift had been placed in the hands of her father. But what was it? This, Mr. Taylor felt to be the serious feature of the affair. He did not know what it was, and how could he ask the child. A few words of conversation in which the child seemed to be aiming to draw out a fuller expression of his appreciation, prepared the way, until he ventured to say "But, my darling, what is it?" "Why, papa, don't you know, it is a ship." "I thought you would like best something I made myself so I made a ship for you. You know you go so much on the ocean on the big ship, and I wanted you to have my little ship with you when you leave us at home." She had voiced her sympathy with her father's vast undertakings. True, it was done in a childish way, but it was a deed of appreciation.

To think that the five-year-old child took such an interest in his work as that—and on his birthday! That token of grateful sympathy outranked many a polished and costly thing.

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But the effect of the thankful heart is, in the moral realm, what shrewdness is in the business world. It sees quickly and far. It is alert. It disposes of the actions of the passing moments, so as to produce the promptest wealth of character. Its gold is nobility, its security is God. And as in money-making, men report that, to save the penny is to gain the dollar, so Gratitude, by the placing of a chair, the speaking of a word (or "the speaking eye"), piles up its wealth only to distribute and re-distribute it again. Within the vast and complex realm of business, it becomes acquainted with the channels of industry and the intricate conditions of receipt and supply, until confident that God's goodness is supremely over it all, and the guarantee of His Holy Spirit is the security for the business, it will not withhold its offerings.

Such an enterprise invites our investment. Then, through gifts, words, songs and deeds, we may be the glad almoners.

As Mary Lyon says:

"All the worth of living is loving, hoping, giving.

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Love survives the breath ; hope grows strong
in death ;

Gifts thy God returns to thee with increase—
Thro' eternity."

Is it not humiliating to think of the

Things We Cannot Give Away?

The ragman refuses to take them, and even the Rummage Sale Committee has no use for them. To have them sent to "the dump," will cost us money. Actually, no one wants them. There is no sense of greatness in offering them. Selfishness could sit on the throne and laugh at seeing them taken away. But they reveal the fact that we can live where we would rather give. The pain and regret upon seeing things leave our grasp, is not in evidence. If to this condition of character, we but add the wealth of genuine gratitude, then we would hardly content ourselves to "pack the box" for the missionary with a grade of stuff, the quantity of which would be as a mountain-range, when the quality would be only as a furrow-ridge.

Gratitude will claim the use of speech and song. Although a condescension, it will consent to gather up and use these means of its

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expression, as the waters of the lake are said to be gathered up and woven into the iris to be bent about the back of the receding storm.

And as in the giving of gifts, we impress material things into the service of gratitude, so in the spoken thanksgiving, words become the servants of the grace. To say "Thank you" is to put a new divinity into language. To talk of the goodness of God, to put the tides of thanksgiving into conversation, that will immortalize the moment's bliss for two or more. Benevolence is at the very threshold, when praise is spoken. Remember also that a word of complaining carries the blight of death to benevolence. But when either incidents, or the general trend of life's affairs, calls forth the thankful comment, cheapness and meanness flee. And they who think and feel thankfully are likely to speak so.

Then speech proving inadequate, the soul makes melody its captive and sings its thanks. The fitness of music never so truly appears, as when it becomes the wings of praise, and thus a new and magical power, impresses it into its exalted and exalting ser-

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vice. If psalms and hymns, doxologies and hallelujahs condescend to the using of melody, then of all conditions in which practice should refuse to stoop to formal habit, surely the singing of praise to God should represent such a condition. The mere harmony of sound cannot be intended as an entertainment to him whose very nature is so melodious that he is said to "joy over his people with singing." And as for the people who hear us, we do not propose to perpetuate a pretense as a means of elevating them. Soulless singing of songs of praise is highly refined hypocrisy. It is a string of falsehoods of which the several expressions are so kindred, they are set to harmony, aggregating, therefore, a harmonized series of lies.

"Singing and making melody in your hearts unto the Lord." There is a real melody for which He listens. He hears the music exquisite through all the prattle of childish lips. Children's voices are so welcome to him, that if all were hushed, inanimate nature might become vocal, until a thing as hard and unresponsive as a "stone would cry out." And can it be the calling of responsible men and women to become melody manufactories

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unto the Lord? Is it that, after all the birds have sung and all the angels have rendered their anthems and all harmonies superb have greeted him who first conceived the worth of melody, that then he should look back of our voices and down into our hearts and rejoice to find us producing melody for him there? Who will say that that is not a programme worth carrying out, man the melodious entertainer, his heart the auditorium and the Eternal God the audience.

My visits to the prisoner have seldom returned me much gratification. The sense of leaving the prisoner there, the clang of the gate and the last look at the grim place, has made me familiar with horror.

But there is one prison to which, in my dreams, I have gone for what I might carry away with me. I do not go there by daylight, I choose the midnight. One would be willing to brave the watchfulness of the guards and creep close up, though it is a dungeon, to get what is offered there. Remember you are in the midnight. Listen! Two male voices are harmonious in praise to God. They are the voices of prisoners. They are the voices of prisoners whose backs were

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striped with the whipping but a few minutes before. They are prisoners who have been thrust into the inner dungeon. Their feet are fast in the stocks, making their position anything but comfortable. Hear them sing. Are they excited? Or charmed? And what makes them so thankful that silent praise is not sufficient? Ah they are above the prison and outside of the dungeon and freer with their feet fast than the birds will be which, some morning, will sing and fly within a hundreds yards of where they are confined. They realize the good care of their Master more than the cruelty of their captors, to them the joy of what they are imprisoned for, is more than the pain of the the stripes, their eyes are toward something about to occur, for they really believe in God, And, too, the prisoners will hear their praises. That is something, for perhaps they will share in it and rise in spirit to the sense that the very wrath of men shall praise God, and, filled with the realization of His goodness, even in affliction shall join in the song. For praise is a soft cushion to stocks. Praise is a light at midnight. Praise will have for its interlude the click of the lock or the snap

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of the hinge opening the prison door, and the stocks will shake down and a gracious Revival will break out before morning. It all occurred. Paul and Silas have had luncheon with the jailor's family and their sore backs have been washed and eased.

Henceforth may you and I know how to behave when every road seems blocked and the midnight is about us. Then sing. Sing until the stocks break. Sing until the jailor enquires for mercy. Sing until you gain the new fellowship and the morning breaks to reveal your liberation and then sing of your liberty. Sing unto the Lord.

"Then," said I, "the charm is upon me, and I will give thanks. When the mystery remains or the vision is clear, when the cup is bitter, or the draft is sweet, wrapt in peace or tossed upon the waves of adversity and danger, chilled with the blast or warm by the glowing hearth, applauded or accused, beckoned onward or tugged at from the downward, in plenty and in little, at home or abroad, wherever, whenever—O Lord, Thou art my God and I will praise Thee."

The Gospel reveals in clearest light the blessing of a minute providence—Jesus has

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signalized the care of God over his creatures in the Sermon on the Mount. To contemplate the provisions in nature for our welfare under the light of the teaching of Jesus is to pronounce us all rich capitalists or plutocrats.

DO NOT THE HILLS ABOUND IN COAL and precious minerals? Is not the sea stocked with the millions of fishes? Do not the trees of the orchard bend their boughs laden with perfume and beauty to the very grass tops, a prophecy of the day when in the Autumn rain they will cast their apples down the hillside to invite the children to share them? Are not the wild woods "full of game?" Who can reckon up the value of even modern by-products? It looks as though the sky might spare a few million systems of worlds and yet on moonlight nights give us ten thousand picture galleries where the soft shadows sparkle with frosty jewels for every State and County.

Is God's providence over our lives as splendid as nature about us? Will all things work together for good, to the man who loves God? Do the winds blow his way and is he sure of either bridge or ice or a divided

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river for his necessary journey? Is his "Keeper" faithful?

But they say we must wait so long and toil so much for the coal and the fruit. The nuts are a weariness to the children as they wait for the frost. Slow old nature! Wait, wait, wait! Yes, but a cargo of sugar from Hawaii was delayed by the storm at sea, until when it arrived at New York the value of the cargo had increased between twenty-nine and thirty thousand dollars.. Though the abundance of nature is to-day so great, it is a repository where preparation of greater wealth for to-morrow is in progress. We can afford to wait. We can afford to toil, too, for toil is of itself such a valuable asset. Singing praises will make a good antidote to tedium.

"There is no tree that rears its crest,
No fern, nor flower that cleaves the sod,
No bird that sings above its nest,
But tries to lisp the name of God,
And dies when it has done its best."

But men do more than rear a fern from the cleft sod. Singing is but the outward expression of the inward wealth. To lisp the name of God was theirs even in irresponsible

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childhood. And rather than die when they have done their best, be it remembered Gospel Thanksgiving gives to the soul a life that death cannot sting. At their best, the trees, the flowers, the birds are of the common school. Yours is the high school. You have the written Law, the Gospel, the Promise, the Life, the Power, the very Spirit of God. Nature in her most harmonious moods, as in a day in June, may at best sway the baton; it is yours to sing the anthem, and play the great organ.

The best that was ever heard, the best that was ever told or sung is given to the children of the Gospel. In return, their "best" cannot be too good.

There is a cost mark to gratitude. When you stand at the counter in the store and the merchant proposes to allow you a special bargain, he will look at the letters on the ticket attached to the article and tell you how much that article cost. You do not understand the import of those letters, but he does. He has the key to the code. And by that means he knows just what has been invested in the article. It is his cost mark representing the price he pays. You may

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refuse to buy, you may even speak critically of the goods, but he has already invested. There is an investment back of the expression of Christian thanks. Who can interpret that code but God himself? Who especially since 'his gift is unspeakable?' We must admit that we never, never can spell out the value of the investment made. What thoughts from eternity in law and promise and atonement! What heart yearnings over our rebellion and folly! What acts of forgiveness and gracious restoring and cleansing! What self-taken humiliation, suffering, sacrifice in God's Son! What urging and down-surgings of his Spirit! There is Calvary and all that leads up to it. There is Calvary and all that flows from it.

Our forefathers told of a poor man from whom a great dog stole a soup bone which he had placed at the entrance to a grocery and when pitied, he said that he thanked the Lord he had his appetite. We need not smile at his statement, for many men in palaces would be ready to hire an orchestra to render the doxology in their reception halls or out on their lawns to-day, if they only had appetites. Some man of wealth will be the sub-

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ject of conversation from one end of the country to the other because he has received appetite enough to enjoy a fried oyster.

I have been told of a woman who was very poor, and who said when she had lost all her teeth but two, that she gave special thanks unto the Lord, because those two teeth were in such a position in her mouth, that "they hit."

Martin Luther spoke of "God so loved the world" (John 3: 16) as "The Gospel in epitome."

Bishop Ken's Long Meter Doxology ranks in the realm of song as the wonderful verse in John's Gospel ranks in the realm of Scripture. Where can we find one stanza so filled to overflowing with the richest meaning as this one?

It is so suggestive of deep thought that it reminds one of a compendium of philosophy and yet its rhythm is so graceful that it sings as easily as a nursery rhyme. Perhaps the tune to which it is usually sung has helped more than we imagine to give ease and grace to the verse. Its frequent use and our familiarity with it must account in part for the dry eyes and cold formality which we so of-

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ten exhibit when we sing it. The depth of thought so evident appears in the first line. There is no prelude. That was substituted with thinking, thinking. There has been such meditation as to prompt the words with majestic appeal, "Praise God from whom all blessings flow." Argument has ceased. Questioning has found its answer. The theories have been thought out. Now it is "Praise God from whom all blessings flow." "In the beginning, God!" "Praise God!" The two phrases are kindred. We are studying inspiration in poetry. It is authoritative. God, ay God alone is to be praised. God of the overflowing nature, our God whose "sun shines on the evil and the good" and whose "rain falleth upon the just and the unjust" is to receive the offered thanks. No urging, no arousing prompts his blessings forth, they flow. "God is good unto all." Ours is the God who reveals himself and when revealed behold what blessings. Though high and holy yet is he communicative, bestowing, sacrificial! Therefore praise him. Bless men, encourage them, love them but remember God also. He will accept thy tribute. Give it, then, to him who ever giveth.

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The second line while more replete with enthusiasm is equally a contribution of deep thinking. "Praise him all creatures here below." The relation between transcendence and immanence seems perfectly balanced in that phrase. Man, his creature, never praises enough. He could not offer sufficient praise. There is always some thanksgiving due. Here we can ever find a place to engage idle moments. Hence the call for "all creatures." Have you heard the birds chant it? Have you heard the lambs bleat it?

The little crickets chirp it. Children think that even the frogs' first "peeping" on a northern spring evening affect it. By night as well as day there is music. They say that if we but detected it we would realize that music filled every passing hour. Some is louder and some is sweeter toned, but there is music unceasing. The "creatures" give it. God made them to do so. "He openeth his hand and satisfieth the desire of every living thing!" Let the chorus swell. From pond and tree, from pasture and wood, from air and plain, beneath, about us in country or city, from crag or from sea let the praise ascend. Let creatures of small degree and man unite.

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It is a tribute to the one eternal God. The outward and downward have been well canvassed for the choir in that second line, now we are to look upward for recruits. "Praise him above, ye heavenly host." There are no creatures too low in the scale of life, but there are none too high, too wise, too holy for such a tribute unto God. Their number, too, is like their exaltation. They are a "host." We cannot engage too many. If they are sinless, all the better. The charm is upon us, the charm of thanksgiving; we must have help. With great freedom do we raise the exhortation to some members of this mighty host, for did they not ascend after singing it here. Their voices then failed them, but we confided that they would still sing on. They well knew this longing, prompted by the spirit of praise, which urges us to ask their help. They know how murmurers have impaired their power to praise. They, with Cherubim and Seraphim, may unite for our assistance, completing the "host."

The Doxology of the soul is being offered, and no possible implement or assistance is unwelcome. These hosts are adepts at this

Gospel Thanksgiving

great business. When we exhaust our ability, we claim the first breath after our latest tribute, to invite the heavenly hosts to take up the honorable task and carry it out.

Deep thought, however, is most revealed in the closing line of the verse. It suggests that praise is so intelligent, that after it has exercised itself Godward for but the space of time needed in the singing of three short lines, it has either discovered or accepted the trinity of the Godhead. The treasured truth is brought back before the anthem ceases, and a compendium of theology results from singing a doxology. We have sung until we have seen. Praising God has revealed him more fully. We rest the anthem there, where sorrow and trouble may also rest. "Praise God from whom all blessings flow."

Amen.

To the only God our Saviour through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and power before all time, and now, and for evermore.

Amen.

—Epistle of Jude, 24; Am. Rev. Version.

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